

Rio Hondo Mental Health Center Celebrates May as Mental Health Month

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Rio Hondo MHC celebrated May as Mental Health Awareness Month by hosting a Resource Fair at Liberty Park in Cerritos on May 25, 2016. The event featured vendors such as NAMI, Our Way, the LACDMH WOW (Wellness Outreach Worker) Volunteer Program, Employment IPS Program, Cerritos College Hospital and St. Francis Hospital. There was food, barbequing, dancing and singing in celebration of May as Mental Health Awareness Month. Former retired LACDMH Deputy Cathy Warner and Service Area 7 District Chief, Ana Suarez, were guest speakers.

Clients shared success stories of mental health recovery and expressed gratitude to Rio Hondo staff for giving them hope. Clients talked about how Rio Hondo staff helped them establish supportive housing when they were homeless and provided help with needed resources.

One WOW volunteer stated, "Rio Hondo saved my life. I want to give back by being a volunteer ... (but) that is not enough to repay everything they have done for me."

Another client brought tears to everyone's eyes, sharing that she had jumped off a building and survived, breaking most of her bones. She is now in recovery: taking medication, receiving therapy and attending groups. She thanked Rio Hondo for helping her when she needed it most. She sang, "I believe I can fly," like an angel as the audience waved their hands in the air.



Rio Hondo Program Manager, Adele Kelso, served as Master of Ceremonies. Rio Hondo staff and a team of WOW volunteers helped make this event possible. Rio Hondo MHC staff and clients truly exemplify the meaning of *hope, wellness, and recovery*.

May as Mental Health Awareness Month gives staff and clients the opportunity to raise public awareness and decrease the stigma associated with mental illness. It gives clients a chance to share their voice and tell their stories. It gives clients the spotlight in sharing their talents by showing their arts and crafts, poetry, singing and dancing. It is also a time for us, as staff, to reflect on why our job is meaningful and fulfilling. We are changing lives and making a difference in the world, one life at a time.